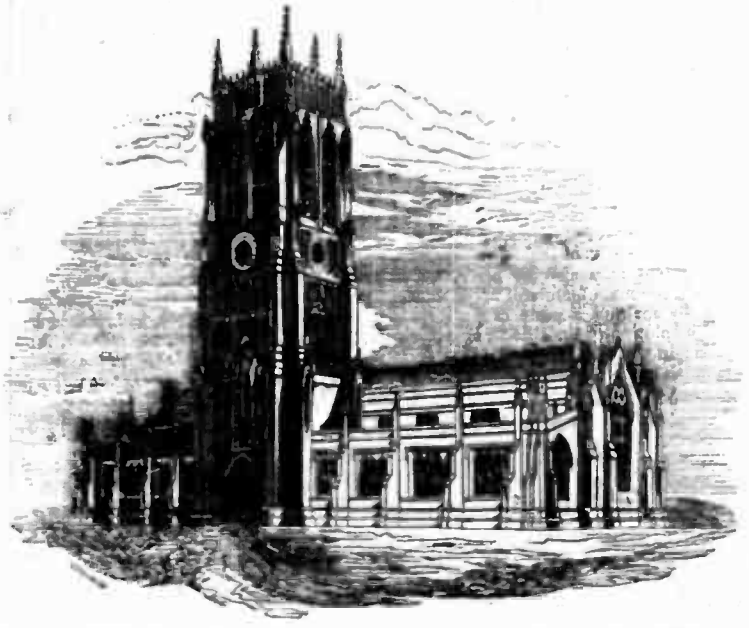
ST. PETER'S CHURCH, LEEDS.



We are enabled this week to present our readers with a sketch of the plain, spacious, and venerable pile of the parish church of St. Peter's, Leeds. The name of its founder and the time of its foundation are unknown. The church is 165 feet in length and 97 feet in breadth; it is built in the form of a cross, with a tower 96 feet in height, rising from the centre on four massy columns with arches. The roof of the church, which is 51 feet high, is supported by three rows of pillars, terminated in pointed arches; and the nave displays a sort of singularity, in being divided into four aisles, which run from the transept to the west end. The choir is spacious, measuring 88 feet by 60, and before the Reformation was divided into several distinct chapels. On the front of the gallery, opposite the pulpit, are the arms of the town—a golden fleece in a field azure, surrounded by a garter, on which is inscribed "Sigillum Burgi de Leedes, 1760," supported by two crowned owls, in honour of Sir John Saville. Over the communion table is a fine painting of the Last Supper, by Permentier; and on the ceiling of the nave is the Ascension, in fresco. by the same artist.

THE NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

Mr. Barry's report on the Houses of Parliament is an exceedingly interesting and able document of its kind. The architect does not limit his ambition to the merely satisfying the public, but is evidently anxious to be allowed to satisfy himself, and thereby bring public taste up to the level of his own; whereas architects have hitherto been rather too subservient—too patient of control; or, at any rate, too forbearing in claiming permission to carry out their own ideas without minute interference, although the doing so may occasion many deviations from the first design, during the progress of the works. It is true, the first design for a building ought to be thoroughly considered in every part, so completely matured, at least before the structure itself is actually commenced, as to admit of no further suggestions or improvements; yet this is not always possible, particularly in so very extensive and complex a pile as the "houses." However happy they may be in themselves, first ideas are not always the happiest of all that may present themselves to the mind from which they emanated. Besides, the time allowed for competitions is generally by far too limited. For study, properly so called, no leisure is allowed, none for careful re-examination, for patient revision and correction; what has been done must be submitted at once with all its imperfections on its head; nor are designs so produced received as mere essays of talent, but as definitive, as what must be either rejected or accepted, without alteration or attempt at improvement. The evil effects of such a system are but too obvious: its consequences betray themselves, more or less, in nearly all our public buildings; for while many which may now be called good might have been very much better, others, and among them some which have not cost the least, look like only so many crude and hasty sketches—"first studies" for things that have evidently received no further study, and, therefore, have scarcely been studied at all.

To such a system Mr. Barry stands opposed, claiming for himself, though he perhaps needs it less than any one else, the privilege of an artist, to work up his ideas as he goes along, to touch and retouch where he considers it necessary, and to improve upon his first ideas, instead of being tied down to them too strictly. And if in this respect he seems to ask for a degree of indulgence and liberty denied to others, he has shewn that he may safely be trusted with it; and the granting it may serve as useful precedent on similar occasions. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that his ideas are not a little elastic, for what he now proposes extends very far indeed beyond what either he himself or any one else contemplated. The enclosing New Palace-yard, and carrying on the west front of the building northwards as far as the corner of Bridge-street,—which being done, we presume there would be a front or range of buildings towards that street also,—would certainly be a very great enlargement upon the original plan. How far it would be attended with decided improvement in point of architectural effect is somewhat matter of doubt; for though so lengthened, that façade would be rendered more imposing as to size, it might also lose something of that effect and picturesque quality which characterized that portion of the first design.

We do not know what Mr. Barry now contemplates doing, should what he proposes be adopted; whether his intention be merely to continue that portion of the west side onwards to Bridge-street, or to reshape it altogether, and bring forward a new design for the whole of it, accommodated to altered circumstances; but the merely lengthening it would be apt to render it comparatively monotonous and flat, destroying that piquant effect of perspective and light and shade which would else attend the north-west view at the angle of New Palace-yard. Even now Mr. Barry's edifice is likely to prove in some respects a rather ungracious and overbearing neighbour to the Abbey; such an unusually lofty, massive, and richly-adorned structure, as the Victoria-tower is intended to be, will certainly not tend to set off that building to advantage in the general view, since the want of a central tower and spire, now evident enough, will then be doubly so; and in fact, unless that feature were added, we do not see what particular improvement it would be to lay open a full view of the north side of the abbey to Whitehall, by clearing away (as Mr. Barry recommends) the houses between Parliament-street and King-street, because there would be nothing to catch the eye at such a distance, or to relieve the monotony of a mass of shade, and a nearly unbroken outline. Perhaps the Abbey will be under less obligations to Charles Barry than it was to James Wyatt, whose "Gothic" front of the House of Lords rendered even St. Margaret's Church a respectable piece of architecture in comparison with it.

We do not say that Mr. Barry is wrong—far from it—in consulting the effect of his own building as much as possible, not only in regard to itself, but as it will be seen in combination with objects; a point, by-the-bye, that is seldom considered as it ought to be, more frequently not considered at all. One object there certainly is which materially affects the view of the east or river front of the "houses"—namely, Westminster-bridge, which, as those who have read the report are aware, the architect is exceedingly anxious should be rebuilt in the manner there explained and urged. We agree with him that it would be a decided and material improvement with respect to the bridge and the traffic over it, the bridge being at present inconveniently steep; and the lowering it and altering the character of its architecture would be a considerable improvement with respect to the "houses;" though hardly, we fear, to the degree that could be wished, because, supposing the roadway of the bridge were made perfectly level from end to end, it cannot be made at all lower than what it now is at its extremities, therefore would still be considerably higher than the terrace on which the "houses" stand. Could this last now be pulled up or elevated about eight or nine feet more, the effect of the river front, at least as seen from the bridge, would have been more stately; and though in that case the terrace itself would have been above the level of the general site (a very low one) on which the edifice is erected, there was nothing to prevent its being done (pecuniary considerations apart), had it been contemplated, at the very outset.

In comparison with some of the other improvements suggested by Mr. Barry, the rebuilding Westminster-bridge may be said to be in the fore-ground of his plans; for some of the others which he has *in prospectu* are so much in the distance, that they are likely to remain for a long time to come, we suspect, entirely in the back-ground, whereas it appears to be almost matter of necessity that it should now be decided, with as little delay as possible, whether the bridge is to be re-modelled. The now proposed deviation from, and enlargement upon the original design by the extension of the west front of the "houses," must also be definitively settled, and it is important to know, if, in case the architect's wishes are acceded to, the public may expect to be made acquainted beforehand with his fresh design for the purpose. Such information ought to be afforded, because what is now so proposed very far exceeds a mere variation of his first set of designs, greatly exceeds also what was contemplated in the first instance, and the programme and instructions by which the competitors were guided at the time in arranging their plans for the best effect on that side of the edifice; therefore, reasonably or not, some of them may say that they would have been able to produce something very superior, and have proceeded quite differently from what they did, could they possibly have had any idea that such latitude would be granted to the architect of the adopted design in carrying out his plans, and such great increase of expenditure. That the last is very great indeed, cannot be denied, for it seems that the total amount of Mr. Barry's estimate is even now not less than 1,016,924*l.* 12*s.* 9*d.* Nor is that by any means all, for there remain some items not taken into that account—viz. for "pavings, furniture, and fittings, and for decorations by works of art;" items likely to add some hundred thousands to the sum total. For fresco painting, and that merely in the corridors alone, exclusively of larger and more elaborate subjects in the principal galleries and state apartments, there will be, it seems, about 26,000 square feet of wall to be so covered. In the halls and galleries, again, there will, in addition to the "pictures," pro-

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